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Report of the Secretary-General on strengthening the partnership between the United Nations and the African Union on issues of peace and security in Africa, including on the work of the United Nations Office to the African Union

I. Introduction

1. The present report is submitted pursuant to the statement by the President of the Security Council of 16 December 2014 (S/PRST/2014/27) in which the Security Council requested me to submit to it an annual report on ways to strengthen the partnership between the United Nations and the African Union on issues of peace and security in Africa, including on the work of the United Nations Office to the African Union (UNOAU). An update is provided in the present report on ongoing efforts to scale up the partnership between the two organizations and the activities of UNOAU in that regard since the issuance of the previous report in September 2016 (S/2016/780).

II. Strategic partnership of the United Nations and the African Union

2. The increasingly complex and often interconnected conflict situations in Africa have necessitated closer collaboration and partnership between the United Nations and the African Union at all levels. The collaboration is underpinned by the shared values enshrined in the Charter of the United Nations and the Constitutive Act of the African Union, as well as by the recognition of the interdependence and complementarity of the two organizations in addressing peace and security challenges in Africa. During the reporting period, the partnership between the United Nations and the African Union on issues of peace and security in Africa reached several important milestones.

United Nations Security Council and African Union Peace and Security Council

3. The United Nations Security Council and the African Union Peace and Security Council adopted significant decisions that advanced the strategic cooperation between the two organizations. In its resolution 2320 (2016), the Security Council commended the progress made in the United Nations-African Union partnership and stressed the need to further develop it into a more systematic

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and strategic one adapted to the complex security challenges facing the continent. Similarly, the Peace and Security Council, in its communiqués of 29 September and 30 May, commended the progress made and reiterated the need to enhance its partnership with the United Nations in accordance with the principles of comparative advantage, division of labour, burden-sharing and consultative decision-making.

4. Coherence in the decision-making of the Security Council and the Peace and Security Council on issues on the agenda of both organizations remains critical for achieving greater strategic convergence and impact. Members of the Security Council and the Peace and Security Council will hold their eleventh annual joint consultative meeting on 7 and 8 September in Addis Ababa. Enhanced dialogue on decision-making between the two Councils will improve the collective ability to respond to the many peace and security challenges in Africa. In their previous consultative meeting, held in New York on 23 May 2016, which marked the tenth anniversary of the annual consultations, the two Councils stressed the need for renewed efforts to enhance their partnership so as to ensure greater synergies and coherence and a more effective response to the challenges facing the African continent (see S/2017/248, annex).

5. In the report of the Secretary-General on options for authorization and support for African Union peace support operations (S/2017/454), I proposed a framework for decision-making as well as tools for African Union peace support operations authorized by the Security Council that could further support Member States in making informed decisions with a view to addressing any given situation and helping to ensure the coordinated undertaking of mandated tasks by the two bodies.

6. To further promote collaboration between the two Councils, the Committee of Experts of the African Union Peace and Security Council participated in a training workshop at United Nations Headquarters from 28 November to 2 December. The initiative was aimed at developing a deeper understanding of the working methods and mandate of the Security Council among African Union representatives and enhancing the working relationship between the two Councils.

7. The three African members of the Security Council, known as the A3, have continued to play a critical bridging role, providing briefings every two months to the Peace and Security Council to promote common African positions and coordination of the Councils. The fourth high-level seminar on peace and security in Africa was held in December in Oran, Algeria, with the participation of the A3, the Peace and Security Council and African Union Commission. The importance of coordination among the members of the A3 to ensure the effective articulation and promotion of Africa's views within the Security Council on issues of interest to the continent was highlighted. Several coordination meetings of representatives of the monthly president of the Security Council and the Chair of the Peace and Security Council were also held.

United Nations Secretariat and African Union Commission

8. The Chairperson of the African Union Commission and I have prioritized the furthering of our partnership in a systematic, predictable and strategic manner, on the basis of the principles of mutual respect and comparative advantage. In my first address to the Assembly of Heads of State and Government at the twenty-eighth African Union Summit, on 30 January, I committed to a new era of cooperation and pledged to contribute to changing the narrative about Africa, to work in support of the African Union's efforts to promote unity and progress and to establish a higher platform of cooperation that recognizes Africa's assets and enormous potential.

9. In that spirit, on 19 April the Chairperson and I convened the first annual United Nations-African Union conference at United Nations Headquarters to facilitate, at the highest levels of the two organizations, a shared understanding of the root causes and drivers of conflict and to promote convergence in decision-making. To underscore our organizations' reinvigorated partnership, the Chairperson and I signed the Joint United Nations-African Union Framework for Enhanced Partnership in Peace and Security, which includes four key action areas: preventing and mediating conflict and sustaining peace; responding to conflict; addressing root causes; and continuously reviewing and enhancing the partnership. It provides a comprehensive strategic vision for a stronger partnership as we jointly address peace and security challenges across the continent. On the basis of the joint framework, I have kept in close contact with the Chairperson of the African Union Commission, and the Deputy Secretary-General and relevant Under-Secretaries-General continue to consult regularly with African Union commissioners and envoys. The Deputy Secretary-General's participation at the twenty-ninth ordinary session of the African Union Assembly, on 3 and 4 July, further reinforced the Organization's strategic dialogue with the Union.

10. With a view to facilitating the implementation of the joint framework, the Secretariat set up an internal working group for enhanced partnership with the African Union in the area of peace and security, while the African Union Commission established a framework implementation task team. The teams, which held several meetings during the reporting period, will play a key role in coordinating the implementation of the joint framework, including through strengthening strategic coherence and operational collaboration and partnership throughout conflict cycles in Africa.

11. Meanwhile, in the context of the joint framework, my special representatives and envoys have continued to collaborate with and complement the efforts of African Union special envoys and representatives, including in Burundi, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, the Gambia, Libya, Somalia, South Sudan and the Sudan. During the period under review, United Nations representatives provided 40 briefings to the Peace and Security Council. Similarly, African Union commissioners, representatives and envoys briefed the Security Council and its subsidiary bodies on issues on the Council's agenda. This practice has facilitated consultation between the two organizations and contributed to greater alignment in the decisions of the Security Council and the Peace and Security Council. Another concrete step in the strengthening of cooperation at the political level between the Secretariat and the Commission has been the issuance of joint communiqués on the situations in, inter alia, the Central African Republic, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Mali and the Gambia.

12. In addition, staff from both organizations continued to work collaboratively on issues of mutual interest. On 13 and 14 December, more than 50 officers of the two organizations participated in the annual United Nations-African Union consultative ("desk-to-desk") meeting on the prevention and management of conflict. The meeting provided an opportunity to exchange information, coordinate positions and develop joint implementation strategies. Director-level videoconferences, which were pivotal for sharing information and promoting common understanding and action on ongoing conflicts, were held throughout the year.

13. The African Union Commission has sought United Nations assistance to help develop its own mission-support capacity, and as a result the Department of Field Support has, since September, included Commission personnel in the one-year senior mission administration and resource training programme, designed to develop mission-support leadership skills. In addition, the Department and the Commission initiated a staff-exchange programme, with the first set of exchanges, in the areas of

human resources and budget and finance, completed in early 2017 and the second set, in the areas of logistics and information and communications technology, scheduled to take place in the second half of 2017.

III. Operational partnership of the United Nations and the African Union

Challenges to peace and security in Africa

14. The African Union and the regional economic communities and regional mechanisms took decisive steps towards unity, peace and prosperity for all people on the continent. Among other measures to effectively address peace and security challenges in Africa, the African Union Assembly, at its twenty-eighth ordinary session, held on 30 and 31 January, endorsed the African Union Master Road Map of Practical Steps for Silencing the Guns in Africa by 2020 (Lusaka Master Road Map), which had been adopted by the Peace and Security Council in November 2016. On the ground, the combined and concerted efforts of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), the African Union and international partners, including the United Nations, helped to avert a conflict in the Gambia following the refusal of former President Yahya Jammeh to accept the results of the December 2016 election. The resolution of the crisis in the Gambia represents a clear example of successful, cost-effective conflict prevention, which is possible when the regional and subregional bodies have a common understanding with the United Nations about the crisis and a unified approach to its resolution.

15. In addition, during the period under review, Somalia continued to register progress in building its federal system and implementing its political road map, thanks to the concerted efforts of the African Union, the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD) and the United Nations.

16. In a number of countries, however, challenges remained. As highlighted by the Peace and Security Council in a press statement in April 2015, among the key drivers of conflict on the continent are marginalization, abuse of human rights, refusal to accept electoral defeat, manipulation of constitutions, mismanagement and unequal distribution of resources, lack of socioeconomic opportunities and unemployment, and corruption. The situation is compounded by the negative impacts of such global phenomena as terrorism and transnational organized crime. As in other parts of the world, international human rights law and international humanitarian law are violated by some Governments and non-State actors in Africa.

17. The conflict in South Sudan has resulted in immense suffering and the unprecedented displacement of civilian populations. Political crises in Burundi, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Gabon and Guinea-Bissau required sustained diplomatic engagement to prevent further escalation. Governments continued to face challenges in addressing the threats of terrorism and violent extremism, most notably in Libya, the Sahel region, the Lake Chad basin and Somalia. It is of grave concern that terrorist organizations have become highly adaptable, expanding territory under their control, uprooting communities, enslaving people, in particular women and children, and committing other heinous crimes. In response to that challenge, the Peace and Security Council in May declared terrorism to be a serious threat to peace and security in parts of the continent. Al-Shabaab and Boko Haram remained active in Somalia and the Lake Chad basin, respectively, and the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (Daesh) was able to establish a foothold in northern Mali and Libya, from which they also posed a security threat to neighbouring countries.

18. Despite the ongoing efforts to grapple with piracy, the Gulf of Aden and the Gulf of Guinea have seen a resurgence of attacks. The implementation of the Yaoundé process on maritime safety and security has been lukewarm, while the Charter on Maritime Security and Safety and Development has so far been ratified by only one country. Meanwhile, in the hinterland, transhumance issues have become increasingly acute as a result of population pressure as well as unpredictable climate dynamics. During the reporting period, deadly clashes occurred between cultivators and pastoralists in the Central African Republic, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Ghana, Kenya, Nigeria and the Sudan. The situation was exacerbated by the proliferation of illicit small arms and light weapons, as well as ammunition and explosives, which took a heavy toll on communities. The illegal exploitation of natural resources and poaching, particularly in the Central African Republic, the Democratic Republic of the Congo and South Sudan, also continued to fuel conflict, destroying the environment and devastating communities.

19. Contested or delayed elections remained a threat to peace and security. In the Democratic Republic of the Congo, the postponement of elections in December created a highly volatile political situation, leading to renewed violence in the country. In the Republic of the Congo, political tensions persisted following the presidential elections in March 2016, while opposition presidential candidates remained under arrest pending trial or had their movements restricted. In Gabon, tensions between the Government and key opposition parties remained despite the conclusion of a political dialogue in May 2017. A number of countries started constitutional reform processes that were divisive and in some cases triggered violence.

20. Furthermore, the dramatic fall in the prices of commodities, in particular oil, continued to inject an incendiary element into political and social tensions in such countries as Chad, Gabon, Nigeria and the Republic of the Congo.

Partnership in conflict prevention and peacemaking

21. In this context, shifting the focus from managing to preventing conflict is my priority and that of the African Union Commission Chairperson as well. Member States of both organizations have repeatedly called for renewed efforts to prevent conflict before its outbreak and to sustain peace, including through the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the African Union's Agenda 2063 and Silencing the Guns by 2020 initiatives. Despite some positive developments in this area, much work remains to be done.

22. During the reporting period, the United Nations and the African Union continued to strengthen their collaboration in conflict prevention and peacemaking. Following the provision by the Department of Political Affairs and UNOAU of technical advice during the design phase, the African Union Commission announced in September the establishment of a Mediation Support Unit within its Peace and Security Department. The United Nations continued to engage with the Unit to determine areas of additional support and capacity requirements, including in the areas of training, knowledge management and mediation facilitation.

23. With a view to advancing the women, peace and security agenda, on 2 June, UN-Women, the African Union Commission and Germany launched the African Women Leaders Network. The launch took place following the High-level Women Leaders Forum for Africa's Transformation, held at United Nations Headquarters from 31 May to 2 June. The Network aims to enhance women's leadership in the transformation of Africa, with a focus on governance, peace and stability.

24. From 19 to 28 July, a joint United Nations-African Union delegation visited Nigeria and the Democratic Republic of the Congo. During the visit, the Deputy

Secretary-General, the African Union Special Envoy on Women, Peace and Security, the Under-Secretary-General/Executive Director of the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN-Women) and my Special Representative on Sexual Violence in Conflict met with senior officials and civil society groups and helped to raise awareness on gender, including gender equality and the importance of women's participation and leadership in electoral and peace processes.

25. Electoral observation and assistance remained a key area of cooperation with the African Union. The Electoral Assistance Division of the Department of Political Affairs maintained a senior electoral expert in Addis Ababa to support the United Nations and the African Union on electoral matters. In addition, in June, a representative of the African Union Commission participated in a training programme on preventing and responding to electoral violence, organized in Jordan by the Division and the United Nations System Staff College. In March, an African Union representative, along with representatives of other regional organizations, participated in a workshop in Cairo on electoral needs assessments and the use of technology in elections organized by the United Nations and the League of Arab States.

26. From 16 to 19 May, the United Nations, the African Union and ECOWAS, along with the European Union, undertook a joint mission to the Gambia to support security sector reform efforts. From 13 to 19 May, the African Union undertook a needs assessment mission to the Gambia, at the request of the Peace and Security Council, to look into ongoing economic reforms and efforts towards national reconciliation. The fifty-first ordinary session of the ECOWAS Authority of Heads of State and Government, held on 4 June, decided to establish the International Contact Group on the Gambia.

27. In the Democratic Republic of the Congo, with the political and technical support of the United Nations, the African Union Facilitator for the national dialogue in the country facilitated efforts that resulted in the signing, on 18 October, of a political agreement between the ruling majority and part of the opposition. Ultimately, the Episcopal Conference of the Democratic Republic of the Congo brokered a comprehensive political agreement on 31 December, with the support of the Economic Community of Central African States (ECCAS), the Southern African Development Community (SADC), the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region, the African Union and the United Nations.

28. However, notwithstanding the welcoming of the collaboration between the United Nations and the African Union, concern about the slow progress in the implementation of the agreement, as well as the escalating violence and the spread of insecurity in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, was expressed at a joint briefing of the Peace and Security Council on 27 March, attended by my Deputy Special Representative and the Special Representative of the Chairperson of the Commission and Head of the African Union Liaison Office in the country.

29. The Office of the Special Envoy for the Sudan and South Sudan continued its effective collaboration with the African Union on peacemaking. This included working with the African Union High-level Implementation Panel on efforts to implement Security Council resolution 2046 (2012). In January, on the margins of the African Union Summit, the United Nations convened a joint consultative meeting with IGAD and the African Union on South Sudan. The Office of the Special Envoy for the Sudan and South Sudan has worked closely with Alpha Oumar Konaré, the former President of Mali, in his capacity as the African Union's High Representative for South Sudan, to determine ways in which the United Nations, the African Union and IGAD can resuscitate the South Sudan political

process, and, where appropriate, support nationally driven efforts such as the national dialogue that have the potential to create transformative change in a country beset by violence and profound political divisions.

30. The Chairperson of the African Union Commission visited South Sudan and reinforced our collaborative efforts, reiterating that the African Union would further engage IGAD and the United Nations on the deteriorating security situation in the country. The Security Council reaffirmed the call for trilateral collaboration at its meeting on South Sudan in March. In cooperation with other entities, the Office of the Special Envoy for the Sudan and South Sudan has actively engaged in the quest to find a regionally supported political solution following the collapse of the 2015 peace agreement,

31. Cooperation between the United Nations and the African Union on the crisis in Libya continued. The United Nations supported the visits to the country by the African Union's High Representative for Libya and the ministerial delegation of the African Union High-level Committee on Libya in May and June. My new Special Representative for Libya looks forward to further strengthening the close working relations with regional organizations, including the African Union, amid growing recognition among international and regional partners of the need for greater cooperation and coordination in advancing the political process in the country.

Partnership in peacekeeping

32. The current security context on the African continent necessitates creative and strategic thinking about a range of peace operations so as to enable an adequate international response to conflict.

33. During the reporting period, the United Nations and the African Union further strengthened collaboration on Somalia at both the strategic and operational levels. The Chairperson of African Union Commission and I visited Mogadishu in the early days of our respective tenures. On 11 May, the Federal Government of Somalia, the United Nations, the African Union and the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland co-chaired the London Somalia Conference at which the parties endorsed a new partnership for Somalia and a security pact, laying out the mutual commitments of the Somali Government and international partners. It also underscored the importance of a conditions-based transition of security from the African Union Mission in Somalia (AMISOM) to Somali forces. At the operational level, UNOAU remained actively engaged with the African Union, supporting AMISOM by providing technical advice for deployment and strategic management.

34. The collaboration between the two organizations has been focused in particular on AMISOM, with the continuing roll-out of the Civilian Casualty Tracking Analysis and Response Cell and other measures and mechanisms to prevent violations of international human rights law and international humanitarian law. The joint review of AMISOM led to several concrete recommendations to strengthen those measures, including the human rights due diligence policy. I wish to emphasize that, in increasingly high-risk environments such as that in Somalia, progress on this compliance framework is a priority of the United Nations-African Union partnership.

35. A joint review of AMISOM, which was undertaken in May pursuant to Security Council resolution 2297 (2016), culminated in recommendations in which the parties reiterated the importance of a conditions-based transition and underscored the need to ensure predictable financing for African Union forces. A transition strategy for the period from 2017 to 2022 was also recommended, and new accountability measures were introduced with a view to enhancing the capacity

of AMISOM to ensure civilian protection and compliance with human rights and international humanitarian law.

36. In the Lake Chad basin region, the United Nations, the African Union and other international partners supported the efforts of the multinational joint task force to combat Boko Haram. On 24 February, the support implementation agreement and the memorandum of understanding between the African Union Commission and the relevant countries contributing troops to the task force, aimed at streamlining additional African Union support to the task force, were signed.

37. Pursuant to resolution 2349 (2017), the United Nations Regional Office for Central Africa (UNOCA) and the United Nations Office for West Africa and the Sahel continued to conduct joint visits to countries affected by Boko Haram to assess the situation and advocate for additional support from the international community for the efforts of Lake Chad Basin Commission member States. United Nations humanitarian entities also worked with national authorities to meet the immediate needs of affected civilians.

38. In Central Africa, the United Nations and the African Union worked closely in support of the Regional Cooperation Initiative for the Elimination of the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA). In cooperation with the African Union, UNOCA, on 15 and 16 December, facilitated a meeting to review the implementation of the United Nations regional strategy to address the threat and impact of the activities of LRA and its implementation plan and to enhance coordination among bilateral partners, civil society groups, non-governmental organizations and United Nations entities working in LRA-affected areas. UNOCA will work with partners in the region, including the African Union, to revise the regional strategy in the light of the withdrawal of Ugandan and South Sudanese troops from the African Union regional task force and the end of the United States Special Forces' mandate to support the task force. Furthermore, UNOAU in December supported the African Union in the planning and revision of the strategic concept of operations of the Regional Cooperation Initiative, as well as in the drafting of the report of experts on the meeting of the joint coordination mechanism of the Initiative, held at the ministerial level in March. Joint planning and management played an important role in ensuring the complementarity of efforts on the ground and alignment between the United Nations and the African Union.

39. In Mali and the Sahel, terrorism and violent extremism continued to pose a significant threat to peace and security. On 13 April, the Peace and Security Council endorsed the strategic concept of operations and authorized the deployment of the joint force of the Group of Five for the Sahel States (Burkina Faso, Chad, Mali, Mauritania and the Niger) for an initial period of 12 months and with a strength of up to 5,000 personnel. On 21 June, the Security Council, in its resolution 2359 (2017), welcomed the deployment of the joint force. It is important that those efforts complement peace efforts in Mali and be coordinated with the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali, the African Union High Representative for Mali and the Sahel, Operation Barkhane, led by France, and related initiatives of such organizations as ECOWAS and those carried out in the framework of the Nouakchott Process, including those addressing the root causes of conflict in Mali and the broader Sahel region.

40. In the Sudan, the African Union-United Nations Hybrid Operation in Darfur (UNAMID) underwent a joint strategic review, from 5 to 17 March, which brought important changes to the mission in the light of the improvement of security in Darfur and political developments with respect to the national dialogue in the Sudan. Subsequently, the Peace and Security Council, in a communiqué of 12 June, and the Security Council, in its resolution 2363 (2017) of 29 June, agreed that UNAMID

should implement a two-pronged approach focusing, in the Jebel Marra, on peacekeeping, military protection, clearance of explosive remnants of war and emergency relief and, in other areas of Darfur, on a peacebuilding-oriented approach aimed at stabilizing the situation by supporting the police and helping to build rule of law institutions while continuing to protect civilians and mediating intercommunal conflict. Within this framework, by June 2018, the mission will have reduced its military component by 44 per cent and its police component by 27 per cent.

41. At the same time, the United Nations worked closely with the African Union and the regional economic communities and regional mechanisms to strengthen the operational readiness of the African Standby Force. For the continent, the operationalization of the Force is a positive development that provides significant opportunities. In January 2016, the African Union Specialized Technical Committee on Defence, Safety and Security declared the full operational capability of the Force, and in October the African Union Commission developed the Maputo strategic five-year workplan (2016-2020) to support efforts to address the remaining challenges. Since then, collaboration between the two bodies has focused on the further strengthening of strategic guidance, military, police and civilian capabilities and mission support systems in line with the Maputo workplan. From 31 July to 2 August, a team from the African Union Commission visited the SADC secretariat to verify, confirm and validate the operational readiness of the SADC Standby Force. The United Nations participated as an observer.

42. There has also been commendable progress in the cooperation of the two bodies on international human rights law and international humanitarian law in peace support operations. In July 2016, African Heads of State and Government agreed to develop a comprehensive human rights and code of conduct compliance framework as part of the effort to reinvigorate the African Union Peace Fund. Subsequent to that decision, UNOAU and the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) worked closely with the African Union Commission to develop strategic guidance to strengthen adherence to international human rights law and international humanitarian law. UNOAU and OHCHR also continued to support the strengthening of human rights mechanisms in ongoing missions through training, planning, monitoring and reporting.

Partnership in peacebuilding and the rule of law

43. The African Union is an important partner of the United Nations in peacebuilding and the rule of law, and as such is uniquely positioned to generate consensus on continental policies and foster regional and national ownership. Despite numerous challenges with regard to peacebuilding efforts, Africa has witnessed incremental progress in promoting security and stability.

44. During the reporting period, the Peacebuilding Fund continued to support 18 countries in Africa. It quickly delivered flexible funding to help prevent relapses into conflict and sustain peace, including in Burundi, the Central African Republic, Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, Liberia and Sierra Leone, all of which are on the agenda of the Peacebuilding Commission. In addition, until February, the Peacebuilding Fund provided direct financial support to the African Union Commission to help sustain the deployment of human rights observers to Burundi, marking the first time the Fund has provided support through a regional organization. In October, the Chairs of the Peacebuilding Commission and the Assistant Secretary-General for Peacebuilding Support visited the African Union Commission to explore ways to further enhance cooperation, in the context of the African Union post-conflict reconstruction and development policy framework adopted in 2006, as well as the African Solidarity Initiative.

45. Meanwhile, the African Union and the United Nations cooperated closely in the key areas of rule of law and security institutions towards the implementation of African Union Master Road Map of Practical Steps for Silencing the Guns in Africa by 2020. On disarmament, demobilization and reintegration, the United Nations, through UNOAU and the World Bank, supported the African Union in the development of the second phase of its disarmament, demobilization and reintegration programme aimed at enhancing knowledge management and training standards. During the reporting period, the United Nations contributed to the development of seven African Union disarmament, demobilization and reintegration operational guidance notes, on children, detention, women, national frameworks, reintegration, countering violent extremism, and foreign fighters. The United Nations also contributed to the African Union's project on managing and accounting for illicit small arms and light weapons. Furthermore, in coordination with the European Union, the United Nations, through a capacity-building programme, supported the African Union Commission in the implementation of a security sector reform policy. At the operational level, joint assessments were conducted in the Gambia and Guinea-Bissau.

46. The United Nations and the African Union strengthened their partnership in mine action through the adoption, in June, of a memorandum of understanding by the African Union Commission and the Mine Action Service of the Department of Peacekeeping Operations. In this context, UNOAU, in cooperation with the Mine Action Service, provided technical guidance and support for the implementation of the African Union Mine Action and Explosive Remnants of War Strategic Framework for 2014-2017 and for the development of a joint African Union-United Nations safety handbook on landmines, explosive remnants of war and improvised explosive devices for use by African Union peace support operations.

47. United Nations and African Union police continued their cooperation with a focus on police planning, guidance, tackling of serious and organized crime, and conduct and discipline. UNOAU provided technical support for the development of the African Union policy on international policing, which was ratified at the second Conference of the African Union Police Strategic Support Group, held from 28 November to 2 December in Addis Ababa. The Group is mandated to harmonize police action across all African Union peace support operations. On 20 April, UNOAU facilitated the first consultative meeting of seven countries contributing police to AMISOM, held in Addis Ababa. The meeting served as a forum for the exchange of views on institutional capacity-building efforts for the Somali police force and the integration in police units of quotas for women and gender mainstreaming.

IV. Financing of African Union peace support operations

48. The necessity of sustained, predictable and flexible funding mechanisms to support African Union peace support operations has been discussed by the legislative bodies of the two organizations for more than a decade. The issue has become more critical in the past two years, following the conclusions of the 2015 High-level Independent Panel on Peace Operations and the decrease in voluntary contributions by the European Union to AMISOM, which have led to a 20 per cent reduction in troop stipends.

49. Since taking office, I, along with the Chairperson of the African Union Commission, have consistently stressed the need to ensure that African Union peace support operations authorized by the Security Council secure sustainable and predictable funding. The African Union has taken important steps to that end since

2015, including through the commitment that its member States finance 25 per cent of its peace support operations, as well as the decision to introduce a 0.2 per cent levy on eligible imports to finance the African Union Peace Fund.

50. I welcome the significant work undertaken collaboratively by our two organizations on this critical issue, as well as the reports of the Chairperson of the Commission on the African Union Peace Fund and on the relevant provisions of Security Council resolution 2320 (2016) on United Nations assessed contributions for African Union-led peace operations authorized by the Council. I take particular note of the African Union's priorities for strengthening the overall effectiveness, management and oversight of peace support operations, which include securing predictable financing within the framework of the Peace Fund, strengthening planning and management capacities, strengthening the partnership with the United Nations and establishing a robust accountability and compliance framework.

51. Partners such as the United Nations can also help to shoulder the financial burden, and in my recent report on options for authorization and support for African Union peace support operations (S/2017/454), I presented some options by which United Nations assessed contributions can be used to support such operations.

52. The report also includes proposals for institutionalized approaches to joint planning and mandating of African Union peace support operations. Different situations will require different planning, financing and support arrangements, but these should be underpinned by jointly agreed principles and decision-making processes. Those processes are intended to complement ongoing efforts within the African Union Commission to establish and strengthen internal accountability mechanisms.

53. On 30 May, during its consideration of the report of the African Union Commission Chairperson on the relevant provisions of Security Council resolution 2320 (2016), the Peace and Security Council reiterated its commitment to the partnership with the United Nations, reaffirmed the principle of African ownership and appealed to its member States to expedite the payment of their annual contributions to the Peace Fund, while calling for a resolution establishing the principle that peace support operations mandated or authorized by the African Union should benefit from United Nations assessed contributions, with decisions on specific missions to be taken on a case-by-case basis. Members of the Security Council, on 15 June and 19 July, highlighted the need to continue the joint work towards supporting Member States in finding a common approach to the perennial issue of securing predictable and sustainable financial support for African Union operations, including on the basis of the proposals of the African Union High Representative for the Peace Fund, who addressed the Council.

V. Partnership with regional organizations and arrangements

Regional economic communities and regional mechanisms

54. It is increasingly important to strengthen the partnership between the United Nations, the African Union and the regional economic communities and regional mechanisms in order to effectively confront peace and security challenges in Africa. African subregional organizations are important partners in a number of areas, including good offices, support for peace negotiations, ceasefire agreements and regional intervention forces. They play a critical role in helping to facilitate complex and fragile peace processes by fostering political will. They are partners of the United Nations on countering terrorism and preventing violent extremism, regional policing strategies and addressing migration, as well as on the development

and the implementation of regional action plans to advance the women, peace and security agenda.

55. During the past year, regional economic communities and regional mechanisms have played an important role in conflict prevention and mediation. For example, ECOWAS has continued to lead good offices efforts and mediation support in the Gambia and Guinea-Bissau. The East African Community continued to lead international interventions in Burundi, while ECCAS led in the Central African Republic. SADC took active measures to ensure that the results of the early elections held in Lesotho in June would be accepted by all stakeholders. High-level engagement to monitor the situation during the electoral campaign, on the part of the SADC Lesotho facilitator, the Deputy President of South Africa and the SADC Oversight Committee on Lesotho, contributed to a peaceful and fair electoral outcome.

56. IGAD played a key role in the conflict-resolution process in South Sudan and made a significant contribution to the formation of federal states in Somalia. Furthermore, in March, the IGAD Assembly of Heads of State and Government adopted the Nairobi Declaration on Durable Solutions for Somali Refugees and Reintegration of Returnees in Somalia, which contained commitments on protection and measures to create an environment conducive to the voluntary return and reintegration of Somali refugees, supported by the international community.

57. Likewise, in Central and West Africa, regional coalitions of the willing continued to be indispensable in confronting violent extremism, as demonstrated in the leading role played by the Lake Chad Basin Commission and Benin in addressing the challenges posed by Boko Haram, the efforts of the Regional Cooperation Initiative for the Elimination of LRA and the renewed attempts by the members of the Group of Five for the Sahel States to grapple with violent extremism in northern Mali and the broader Sahel.

Other regional organizations and arrangements

58. Cooperation between the United Nations, the African Union and other regional organizations continues to be a priority. The effectiveness of the United Nations rests in large measure on our cooperation with those organizations. Pooling resources on the basis of the principle of comparative advantage and jointly pursuing a common approach has proven both necessary and efficient.

59. The situation in Libya provides one example of the increasing level of cooperation among regional organizations. The United Nations, the African Union and the League of Arab States, on 25 October, inaugurated a group known as the Troika with the objective of enhancing cooperation and coordination to encourage national reconciliation and the implementation of the Libyan Political Agreement. On 18 March, the Troika welcomed the participation of the European Union in the forum, which was thenceforth known as the Quartet. On 23 May, the Quartet reiterated its collective commitment to advancing the United Nations-facilitated political process towards resolving the crisis in Libya. The ongoing engagement increased confidence among the four organizations, allowing them to harmonize their positions and to utilize their comparative advantage with a view to working together to further a common agenda.

60. The numerous cases of simultaneous United Nations, African Union and European Union engagements in Africa demonstrate that the three organizations are able to contribute the necessary skills and find solutions to crises and post-conflict situations based on the principles of comparative advantage, added value and burden-sharing. On 5 July, on the margins of the African Union Summit, my Special

Representative to the African Union attended a meeting of executives and senior officials of the African Union, regional economic communities, regional mechanisms and the European Union on peace and security. The meeting was focused on strengthening political and strategic dialogue and on mobilizing international support to that end, with a view to identifying recommendations for consideration by the Africa-European Union Summit, to be held in Abidjan in November. The establishment of a collaborative platform on peace and security in Africa bringing together the United Nations, the African Union and the European Union to strengthen political and strategic dialogue was mentioned as a possible outcome of the upcoming Summit.

VI. United Nations Office to the African Union

Strengthening the strategic and operational partnership

61. During the reporting period, UNOAU continued to work closely with the African Union to strengthen complementarity and unity of action. The Office is a key conduit for enhancing strategic and operational partnership with the African Union, providing substantive and technical support and facilitating convergence in decision-making, including between the Security Council and the Peace and Security Council. The Office provided 29 briefings to the Peace and Security Council and facilitated 8 briefings by senior United Nations representatives to promote a common understanding on conflict situations and to develop collaborative approaches. Furthermore, since the previous report, UNOAU has provided five country-specific or thematic briefings for representatives of States members of the Security Council resident in Addis Ababa. The Office played a vital role in developing the Joint United Nations-African Union Framework on Enhanced Partnership in Peace and Security and in the preparations for the first United Nations-African Union annual conference, the regular meetings of the joint task force and desk-to-desk meetings. UNOAU supported the preparations for and the conduct of the joint African Union-United Nations review of AMISOM. In addition, UNOAU provided secretariat and logistical support for visits by the Security Council and the Peacebuilding Commission to Addis Ababa.

62. UNOAU also supported the strengthening of the institutional capacity of the African Union to plan and manage its peace support operations, from policy development to force preparation. The initial work in aligning policies standards and practices will form the basis for strengthened cooperation between the two organizations in peace support operations and mission transitions. UNOAU will continue to play an important role in coordinating United Nations support for the implementation of the Maputo strategic five-year workplan (2016-2020) to strengthen the African Standby Force, manage conflicts on the continent and strengthen coordination and information-sharing between the United Nations and the African Union.

Restructuring the Office to meet the growing demands of the partnership

63. In its resolution 71/270, the General Assembly approved the proposal of the Secretary-General to restructure UNOAU so as to strengthen strategic coherence with the African Union and the regional economic communities and regional mechanisms throughout the conflict cycle. In its resolution 2320 (2016), the Security Council recognized that further realignment might be necessary as a result of the assessment of United Nations-African Union cooperation, including the

structure and resource capacity of UNOAU, to meet the growing demands of the partnership.

64. The new structure, which took effect on 1 January, enables UNOAU to contribute more effectively to efforts aimed at achieving greater political convergence and operational cohesion between the United Nations, the African Union and its partners on peace and security in Africa. The Office integrates two pillars: the Political Affairs Section and the Institutional and Operational Partnership Service. They jointly report to a newly established Deputy Head of Office. A new Office of the Chief of Staff oversees the integrated and coherent functioning of UNOAU across all areas. I intend to carry out an assessment of UNOAU, pursuant to Security Council resolution 2320 (2016), that will comprehensively evaluate the growing needs of the United Nations-African Union partnership and the capacity of UNOAU to meet the demands placed on it.

VII. Observations and recommendations

65. Stronger partnership with the African Union and the regional economic communities and regional mechanisms will enable the United Nations to respond early, swiftly, coherently and decisively to prevent conflict and effectively address challenges to peace and security. I welcome progress on the partnership made during the reporting period. The signing of the Joint United Nations-African Union Framework for Enhanced Partnership in Peace and Security, the start of the operationalization of the African Union Peace Fund and the adoption by the Security Council of resolution 2320 (2016) represent solid steps towards further elevating our platform of cooperation in Africa. I commend the Chairperson of African Union Commission for his leadership and commitment in that regard, and once again reiterate my intention to continue working to further strengthen the partnership.

66. Since taking office, I have emphasized my intention to work more proactively on conflict prevention. The Chairperson of the African Union Commission has expressed the same intention. In the joint framework, both organizations committed to early engagement, to sharing early warning information and analysis with a view to reaching a common understanding of emerging or ongoing conflicts and, through consultative decision-making, to developing collaborative approaches. The Secretariat will work to strengthen its coordination with the African Union to achieve this, including through closer collaboration among special representatives and envoys. It is imperative that the progress achieved in recent years with respect to consultation and collaboration between the Security Council and the Peace and Security Council be consolidated.

67. I look forward to working with the African Union to continue to enhance our partnerships with Africa's regional economic communities and regional mechanisms. They are at the forefront of our efforts to achieve peace and security on the continent, and they are the driving force for achieving Africa's development objectives. The only way that the international community can address conflicts on the continent is in unity with the countries of the region, with the ability to serve together and according to the same universal principles. My special representatives and envoys in the African subregions will work closely with UNOAU to facilitate greater information-sharing and joint action among the United Nations, the African Union and the regional economic communities and regional mechanisms, particularly on the causes and drivers of conflict. The deeper and more consistent the collaboration, the greater the certainty of achieving the goals of the 2030 Agenda and Agenda 2063.

68. The increase in regional peacekeeping and peace support operations confirms that the demand in Africa today exceeds what the United Nations, the African Union or any other regional or subregional organization by itself can meet. While new strategic thinking on the diversity of peace operations is needed to ensure that the international community is able to respond adequately to conflict situations, the high demand confirms that peacekeeping remains indispensable, not only as a versatile tool, but also as a highly cost-effective instrument. From Somalia to Mali, from Darfur to the Central African Republic, we have accumulated a considerable degree of expertise and some unique capabilities. I pay tribute to African peacekeepers, many of whom have paid the ultimate price for contributing to the goals of the Charter of the United Nations.

69. While we are witnessing some encouraging signs of progress, our operations can succeed only if the African Union and regional economic communities and regional mechanisms continue to help create political space for political solutions to take root. The joint framework will enable us to sustain a strengthened, dynamic dialogue in order to make structural improvements to our common response efforts, based on shared assessments, joint planning exercises and concerted decisions. It is important to enhance efforts to achieve a unified political vision, as well as to agree on what it takes to implement it.

70. Enhancing African capacities in the area of peace and security requires adequate, timely and predictable financing for African Union peace support operations. During the reporting period, African Union member States have taken important steps towards greater self-reliance and burden-sharing. I applaud this progress and the African Union's continuing commitment to covering 25 per cent of the cost of its peace support operations, as well as the significant work undertaken by the two organizations on the report on the joint review of available mechanisms to finance and support African Union peace support operations authorized by the Security Council (A/71/410-S/2016/809), the report of the Secretary-General on options for authorization and support for African Union peace support operations (S/2017/454) and the report of the African Union on the relevant provisions of Council resolution 2320 (2016) on United Nations assessed contributions for African Union-led peace operations authorized by the Council.

71. I recognize that the implementation of African Union decisions on the financing of the Union and its Peace Fund will require strong leadership and commitment. However, the continued support and encouragement of the Security Council, particularly on the issue of predictable and sustainable financing of peace support operations authorized by the Council, is needed to help translate words into action. Such support would reinforce the Council's primary responsibility, under the Charter of the United Nations, for the maintenance of international peace and security, while also recognizing the important role of regional organizations consistent with Chapter VIII of the Charter.

72. Effective African capacity for peacekeeping is increasingly important, both in the context of our collective response to international peace and security challenges and for stability on the African continent. The determination of the African Union and African countries is real and encouraging, including with regard to the further development of accountability frameworks. Our reports have highlighted the importance of compliance and oversight of African Union peace support operations through robust and effective human rights mechanisms and a conduct and discipline framework. The United Nations will continue to work closely with the African Union to build predictable approaches to the partnership, including on the planning of peace operations, as well as on issues related to budget and finance, audit and accountability, human rights compliance, and conduct and discipline, with a view to strengthening complementarity of efforts.

73. In furthering this spirit of cooperation and recognizing the principle of comparative advantage, the United Nations is committed to looking at response mechanisms in a more integrated fashion and working towards an interlocking system of capabilities that is flexible, working across and between regions, particularly through the African Standby Force and its rapid deployment capability. It is in the interest of the United Nations to continue to support the enhancement of African Union capacities in conflict prevention and management but not to defer responsibility for conflict in Africa, aiming at strengthening the collective security system. Close cooperation among the United Nations, the African Union and other key partners, such as the European Union, is critical for achieving those objectives. To that end, I look forward to exploring the possibility of establishing trilateral collaborative mechanisms.

74. I am committed to strengthening our cooperation and partnership on the basis of the priorities and needs of the people of Africa. We shall continue to work together to create the conditions necessary for the African continent to fully meet the aspirations of its people, especially its youth.

75. As outlined herein, UNOAU continues to play a pivotal role as the first port of entry to the United Nations for the African Union in our growing partnership. The day-to-day engagements between UNOAU and African Union officials are the building blocks in our efforts to share views and analyses, seek common ground on issues of concern and undertake joint action to address them. UNOAU plays an important role, one that I will continue to review and strengthen in line with the demands of the partnership.

76. Africa's needs remain significant, but so are the contributions that Africa has made to further unity, peace and progress for all people on the continent. We need to fully integrate African success stories into our United Nations narrative. I acknowledge and value with humility the contribution and sacrifice made by so many African countries to the United Nations around the world and to peace operations in Africa. I would like to pay tribute to the Chairperson of the African Union Commission, Moussa Faki Mahamat, for his leadership and his commitment to the management reform process. I also wish to express my appreciation to the African Union, its member States and the regional economic communities and regional mechanisms for their continued cooperation with the United Nations in efforts to address challenges to peace and security in Africa. I also wish to express my appreciation to my Special Representative to the African Union, as well as the staff of UNOAU and that of all United Nations and African Union entities serving to advance peace, security and development in the region.